

IOWA BIRD LIFE

Spring 1987 Volume 57 Number 2



IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

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FRONT COVER: Northern Saw-whet Owl, Iowa City, 21 February 1987.
Photo by Carl J. Bendorf.

INSIDE BACK COVER: Editorial Staff, Subscription/Membership Information,
Instructions to Authors, Officers, Board of Directors, Standing Committees.

BACK COVER: Meeting Dates, Report Deadlines, Birdline, Materials Available.

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The IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, founded in 1923, encourages interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds in Iowa and seeks to unite those who have these interests in common. *Iowa Bird Life* and *I.O.U. News* are quarterly publications of the Union.

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Institutions may subscribe to *Iowa Bird Life* for \$15 per year. Individuals may join the Iowa Ornithologists' Union according to the following membership classes: Regular (\$12); Regular as spouse or minor child of another Regular member without publications (\$4 first additional family member, \$2 each additional family member); Contributing (\$12 plus any additional tax-deductible contribution to the I.O.U.); and Life (\$250 as single payment or \$62.50 for each of four years). Members but not subscribers will also receive the quarterly *I.O.U. News* and are eligible to vote and hold office in the Union. Send subscriptions, membership payments, or address changes to Francis L. Moore, Treasurer, 336 Fairfield St., Waterloo, IA 50703.

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Original manuscripts, notes, letters (indicate if for publication), editorials, and other materials relating to birds and bird finding in Iowa should be sent to the editor. Accepted manuscripts will generally be published promptly, depending on space available, with the following absolute deadlines: 15 November for the Winter issue; 15 February for the Spring issue; 15 May for the Summer issue; and 15 July for the Fall issue. Most manuscripts will be refereed. All material should be typed double-spaced or hand printed in ink on 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper. Authors should pattern their style after a current issue of the journal. If you want more detailed guidelines or advice regarding the appropriateness of your topic for *Iowa Bird Life*, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the editor.

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UPCOMING MEETINGS OF IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

*29-31 May 1987, Sioux City

*13-15 November 1987, 4 H Camp, Luther

BIG DAY COUNT 1987

*For entry forms write to Ray Cummins, 609 S. Main St., Centerville, IA 52544.

FIELD REPORTS

Anyone observing birds in Iowa is encouraged to report their findings on a quarterly basis to the Field Reports editors. Sample reporting and documentation forms suitable for duplication are available from the editor (send self-addressed stamped envelope to T. H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52240). An article describing the reporting process is also available.

Deadlines for receipt of field reports are as follows:

*Winter (Dec, Jan, Feb)--3 March (W. Ross Silcock, Box 300, Tabor, IA 51653)

*Spring (Mar, Apr, May)--3 June (Robert K. Myers, RR2 Box 153, Perry, IA 50220)

*Summer (Jun, Jul)--3 August (James J. Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010)

*Fall (Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov)--3 December (Carl J. Bendorf, 825 7th Ave, Iowa City, IA 52240)

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

*Deadline for receipt of reports: 15 January. For forms and instructions write: W. Ross Silcock, Box 300, Tabor, IA 51653.

IOWA BIRDLINE 319-622-3353

The birdline is a two to three minute recorded summary of interesting recent bird sightings in Iowa. At the end of the report you can leave a message and report your recent sightings. Be sure to give your name and phone number as well as the location of the bird and date seen. Call in as soon as possible after sighting a rare bird. Carl Bendorf checks the reports daily and updates the recording on Monday, so make sure Sunday sightings are reported by Sunday night.

I.O.U. NEWS

Send items of interest for the newsletter to the editors (J. Hank and Linda Zaletel, 715 West St., Colo, IA 50056).

MATERIALS AVAILABLE

Back issues of *Iowa Bird Life*--send self-addressed stamped envelope to the Editor of Iowa Bird Life for order form.

REPORTING NEBRASKA BIRDS

Sightings of Nebraska birds, including those within the Nebraska portion of De Soto N.W.R., should be reported to Loren and Babs Padelford, 1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, NE 68005. Formats for reporting and documentation are the same as for Iowa.

ISSN 0021-0455

FROM THE PRESIDENT

CARL J. BENDORF

The I.O.U. Spring Meeting at Ames in May 1982 marked a turning point in our organization. During the business meeting there was an open and lively discussion about the condition of the I.O.U. Our financial position was weak, and many felt the I.O.U. was not meeting the needs of its members.

Immediately after this meeting, President Silcock appointed a special Review Committee with a broad charge to examine the I.O.U. and to recommend changes that could strengthen the organization. Chaired by Jim Sandrock, the Review Committee evaluated all aspects of the I.O.U., including meetings, publications, projects, and membership services. A questionnaire circulated to all members provided a base for the review.

In April 1983, the Review Committee recommendations were approved by the membership. In the ensuing five years, the following eight recommendations have been fully implemented through the revision of our Constitution and actions of the Board of Directors and standing committees:

1. a standing Membership Committee was established.
 2. the Nominating Committee was mandated to circulate a slate of candidates at least one month before elections.
 3. a standing Publications Committee was established to set policy for and oversee all I.O.U. publications.
 4. a standing Library/Historical Committee was appointed to preserve I.O.U. materials.
 5. a newsletter was started.
 6. the Vice-president is responsible for planning the Spring and Fall meetings.
 7. the Board of Directors has had at least one separate meeting each year.
 8. the Constitution reflects changes necessitated by these recommendations.
- There are still three Review Committee recommendations that have not yet been fully implemented. They are:
1. development of affiliation with local ornithological groups.
 2. regular sponsorship of statewide ornithological activities.
 3. establishment of an endowment fund to enhance our financial stability.

In November 1986, the Board of Directors met to discuss the present condition of the I.O.U. and to set new goals. The Board felt it is difficult to build a formal connection with the many ornithological organizations in Iowa. Some exchange of information is being done with our newsletter, e.g., field trip and meeting dates, and news of local projects. The Board will continue to cooperate with local Audubon Societies, bird clubs, and other nature groups.

We also evaluated our involvement in various ornithological projects: Breeding Bird Atlas, Bird-a-thon, Feeder Survey, and several others. The Board will continue to support these activities and explore other suitable projects.

Almost all of our discussion last November kept leading us back to one fundamental concern—the need for a stronger financial base. Whether we talk about sponsoring a new project or improving some aspect of our publications and meetings, the bottom line is that we need more money. The re-

cent response to our call for more contributing members has been outstanding. Last year's Bird-a-thon also raised a sizable sum. But any organization must be able to support its regular budget items with planned and steady income. With the steady improvement in *Iowa Bird Life* and our fledgling *I.O.U. News* has come a corresponding increase in pressure on our annual budget. At present, the income from regular annual dues is less than our basic expenses. The shortfall can be covered with reserve funds, but we cannot continue this sort of financing.

The Board is committed to continuing the improvement and growth in our organization that was initiated by the membership. To this end, we have set specific one- and three-year goals, including the following:

One-year goals:

1. set up an endowment fund.
2. establish a new accounting system.
3. increase membership to at least 500.
4. strengthen projects, with special attention to the Breeding Bird Atlas and the Bird-a-thon.

Three-year goals:

1. set membership goals.
2. build the endowment fund.
3. work toward establishing a central office for the organization.
4. strengthen contacts with regional clubs.

I think the most important of these goals is to increase our membership. Our membership committee must conduct a continuing campaign to identify prospective members and to make it easy for them to join. Personal contacts, targeted mailings, retention of present members, and general publicity for the I.O.U. can be parts of a successful recruiting effort.

Fund raising activities like the Bird-a-thon and increasing membership contributions can help build a reserve fund to use for special projects deemed appropriate by the membership and the Board of Directors. An example might be possible publication by the I.O.U. of the results of the Breeding Bird Atlas Project. This is something that is worth while, but does not easily fit into an annual budget.

The I.O.U. has come a long way since that pivotal Spring Meeting just five years ago. With your continued interest and support we can do much more.

825 7th Avenue, Iowa City, IA. 52240

MEET AN IOWA BIRDER: W. ROSS SILCOCK

BARBARA L. WILSON

As soon as one hears W. Ross Silcock's pleasant, distinctive voice, it is obvious that there is something unusual about him. The broad vowels and soft consonants are not the field marks of any midwesterner, although their true origin is hard to discern. Is there something southern here, or perhaps faintly British? Time spent researching milk secretion in dairy goats in North Carolina left its mark on his voice, but actually Ross is a transequatorial vagrant from New Zealand, where he was born on 15 December 1944. He is one of few Iowans with Black-backed Magpie and Tui on his life list; however, this ex-Kiwi has not seen a wild Kiwi.



Ross (the W. is for William) had a boy's broad interest in nature that became focused on birds under the influence of a high school Latin teacher, who was also president of the New Zealand Ornithologists' Union. Identification is rarely a problem with New Zealand's limited number of strange land birds, so Ross concentrated on the study of bird behavior and ecology.

Ross set aside his avian interests during college, where he studied agricultural science, concentrating on ruminant biochemistry. This work brought him to Pennsylvania State University in 1968, where he received his Ph.D. degree and met his wife Lyn, who was raised on a farm in Kansas. While on a post-doctoral program at North Carolina State University in 1972-1973, his dormant interest in birds was reawakened when he became involved with an active group of coastal birders. The group stressed careful identification and the importance of providing evidence for rare sightings. After farming for a year in North Carolina, Ross moved in February 1975 to Fremont County to manage a hog operation.

Although busy with the large hog facility and a young family, Ross found time to pursue his ornithological interests after moving to Iowa. He soon became an expert on the birds and birding locations of southwest Iowa and has been a member of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union since 1975. He immediately began to attend I.O.U. meetings, at which he birded with Pete Petersen. Pete recognized his talents and offered him the job of compiling the Christmas Bird Counts for *Iowa Bird Life*.

Ross's main interests are pursuing problems of bird identification, studying the distribution patterns of birds, finding as many birds as possible in Iowa, and participating in Big Day birding events. Time and distance prevent him from chasing many vagrants that appear in Iowa, but he points out that most will show up in southwest Iowa sooner or later. Sometimes Ross forces the state's listers to come to his corner of the state. Such was the case when he discovered a Ruff feeding at his manure pit (affectionately known as Lake Manure--pronounced man-your-ay).

Ross became acquainted with Iowa's most active birders by attending I.O.U. meetings and by providing information for those visiting southwest Iowa. Many saw the Common Barn-Owls nesting at his rural home, and the crowd that came to see Iowa's first Barrow's Goldeneye at Forney Lake was

provided with a hot lunch. In 1983, Ross and Lyn and their children, Matthew and Jacque, moved to Tabor, and, in 1986, Ross entered the insurance business, which has reduced the time he has available for birding.

Ross has held many positions in the I.O.U. He served on the Executive Council from 1977 to 1979 and from 1983 to 1985, as Vice President in 1980-1981, and as President from 1981 to 1983. As President, Ross appointed a Review Committee to examine the long-range goals of the I.O.U. and to make recommendations. The results of this effort eventually led to a new constitution and an expansion of I.O.U. activities. Ross has written the report of the Christmas Bird Count for *Iowa Bird Life* since the 1976 count, and, in 1986, became the Field Reports Editor for the winter season. He was appointed to the Checklist Committee in the late 1970s. In 1980, he and Tom Kent recommended to President Carl Kurtz that this committee be transformed into the Records Committee, a committee that Ross has served on since that time. Throughout his efforts as editor and as a member of the Records Committee, Ross has stressed the need to supply evidence for unusual sightings. According to Ross, meaningful interpretation of distribution patterns requires that reports not only be correct, but that they can be shown to be correct.

Not content with annoying Iowans by his conservative approach to the acceptance of rare sightings, Ross joined Babs Padelford and Tanya Bray in reviewing Nebraska bird records, a collaboration which resulted in the publication of *Nebraska Birds: A Critically Evaluated List*.

It is fun to bird with Ross. His enthusiasm is contagious and sometimes surprising. Merely impassable terrain does not stop him. In fact, Ross introduced me to the joy of wading through marshes in search of grebe nests. Well do I remember one June day at Riverton Area, with temperature and humidity in the nineties and herds of starving mosquitoes hovering among the shoulder-high nettles, when we had to persuade Ross that even a Prothonotary Warbler wasn't worth this torture. Omaha birders had a legendary introduction to Ross on a spring bird count when he stated that there must be a Least Bittern in a ditch that contained sparse, scraggly cat-tails. The dubious Omahans pointed out that this species had never been seen on their spring count, the habitat was inadequate, and, in any case, the bird could not be seen. Ross plunged in and flushed a bittern, and then waded on to prove that he could also flush a Sora. His reputation was made.

Ross is just as concerned that no rarity be overlooked as he is that each vagrant be accurately identified and substantiated. By the end of a day's birding with Ross, one feels that unusual birds have been seen (even if they have not), because they have been the topic of conversation all day. He has so much fun identifying birds that even peeps are made interesting.

Lately it has been difficult to find Ross to go birding. If he isn't evaluating hail damage to crops, he is organizing a parade in Sidney. Iowa birders can look forward to the time when his business is firmly established, so we can be more frequently entertained by this enthusiastic, transplanted Kiwi.

RR 1, Box 41, Hastings, IA 51540

A RECORD BIG DAY IN CENTRAL IOWA

STEVE DINSMORE AND ERIK MUNSON

For the past three years, the authors have teamed up with Gordon Brown to do an annual mid-May Big Day in central Iowa. The companionship and challenge of a Big Day make this an exciting part of each spring. Each year, as we learn the area better, we adjust the route to maximize our species list. We saw 141 species on 12 May 1984, and 147 species on 11 May 1985. On 10 May 1986, we jumped to 171 species found over our 320 mile route through eight central Iowa counties.

The success of a Big Day depends on luck and planning. We spent the week before the count checking out potential areas for birds. Because of the wet spring, there were plenty of areas for shorebirds and waterfowl. We worried, however, about the lack of warbler waves. Part of our strategy is to use Gordon's small station wagon, so that we can cover 350 miles without stopping for gas. We try to spend as much time out of the car as possible, hiking four to five miles to see birds not visible from the car. We follow the American Birding Association Big Day rules.

As the time for the Big Day approached our excitement increased. Even though rainy weather was threatening, we were ready to attempt breaking the Iowa Big Day record of 154 species.

2:00 a.m., 10 May 1986: The three of us are on our way to the first stop at a small marsh in Boone County where we hope to hear Virginia Rail and Sora. A steady, light rain is falling as we leave Ames.

2:25 a.m.: The rain has stopped and we quickly get several Soras and 2 Virginia Rails to answer our tapes. We then decide to take a long shot and we play a King Rail tape. Almost immediately one responds from the middle of the marsh. We also hear several Marsh Wrens. We are off to a great start!

4:40 a.m.: We have just arrived at Ledges State Park after dodging several thunderstorms along the Des Moines River bottoms. In the river bottoms we hear Black-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Screech-Owl, Barred Owl, and Whip-poor-will, plus a bonus bird—a Wild Turkey gobbling well before dawn. The skies are still overcast, and it is raining a little. It appears that most of the storms have passed to the north. The woods are now quiet, and we can hear the chip notes of hundreds of migrating passerines overhead. Will they land here? We anxiously anticipate the first sign of dawn. Our list is up to 18 species, and we have driven 52 miles.

7:30 a.m.: It is finally getting light enough to identify birds visually. We have lost almost an hour of daylight due to the overcast sky. As we get out of the car, a light drizzle is falling, and the woods are alive with hundreds of warblers, vireos, thrushes, and other passerines. We quickly work down the lower canyon and find some of the migrant species, including Olive-sided Flycatcher, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Cape May Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and a late Pine Siskin. We also add several of the Ledges specialties, including Broad-winged Hawk, Acadian Flycatcher, Northern Parula, Cerulean Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Kentucky Warbler. Apparently, the light rain has not hampered the birds, for they are very active.

8:40 a.m.: We stop at the cabin in lower Ledges to look for Yellow-throated Warbler and sparrows. Two of the warblers are singing vigorously in their usual trees, and we find the Lark and Clay-colored Sparrows that have been here for several days. The small cluster of trees around the cabin is full of warblers. We add Golden-winged, Black-throated Green, Bay-breasted, and Wilson's warblers plus Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Scarlet Tanager, and Orchard Oriole.

9:25 a.m.: A quick stop at Lost Lake area produces the expected Blue-winged Warbler. With our unanticipated luck with migrants, our list is already up to 116 species.

10:00 a.m.: We make a brief stop at a farm pond to see a lingering Snow Goose before heading to Big Creek State Park.

10:20 a.m.: At the beach in Big Creek State Park we see 3 American White Pelican and several Black Terns, but no loons, grebes, or ducks.

10:40 a.m.: At the Polk City Wildlife Area we find 2 Great Blue Heron, several Canada Geese, and an Osprey. The Great Egret that was there yesterday has left, and we will miss that species today.

10:45 a.m.: We make another short stop at Oak Grove Beach at Saylorville Reservoir where we add Ring-billed Gull and a very late Bonaparte's Gull, but no terns. Our list is now up to 124 species. At this point in the day we must formulate our plans for the afternoon. We usually try to cover another wooded area to find passerines that we have missed at Ledges State Park; however, because we did so well at Ledges, we decide to spend the afternoon concentrating on waterfowl and shorebirds. We will follow our alternate route west to Lakin and Dunbar sloughs and end the day at Big Wall Lake. This turns out to be a wise choice.

12:20 p.m.: We have arrived at Lakin Slough in Guthrie County. On the way we found several Baird's Sandpipers in flooded fields. We also saw a Red-shouldered Hawk perched over the Raccoon River west of Milburn. At Lakin we find several Great-tailed Grackles and our first Pied-billed Grebe, Gadwall, Swamp Sparrow, and Yellow-headed Blackbird.

12:55 p.m.: We have checked several flooded fields with no luck, but hit the jackpot west of Bayard. Among the hundreds of shorebirds in a large flooded field we see our first Lesser Golden-Plover, Hudsonian Godwit, White-rumped Sandpiper, Dunlin, Stilt Sandpiper, and Franklin's Gull. In a smaller flooded area on the other side of the road there are more shorebirds. Steve finds two excellent birds--Marbled Godwit and Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Our list is at 133 species.

1:20 p.m.: We have just checked our favorite flooded fields in southwest Greene County. There are not many birds here today, but we do add American Wigeon and Solitary Sandpiper. As we were leaving, Erik notices a dead bird hanging on a fence. It is a freshly killed Least Bittern that has impaled itself on the barbed wire. We cannot count dead birds, so we will go without Least Bittern today.

1:25 p.m.: Our next stop is a large pasture in Greene County that has been excellent for Upland Sandpiper. As we drive up, an Upland Sandpiper is calling. We also see Loggerhead Shrike, Savannah and Grasshopper Sparrows, and two more Buff-breasted Sandpipers. Just as we are about to leave, a Gray Partridge scuttles across the road for our 140th species.

2:10 p.m.: We are leaving Dunbar Slough where we have added several badly needed waterfowl, including Northern Shoveler, Lesser Scaup, an extremely late Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, and Ruddy Duck. We also saw an Eared Grebe, an unexpected bird. The grebe ties the Iowa Big Day record of 154 species, and a Double-crested Cormorant perched on a muskrat house breaks the record. We pause for brief congratulations before moving on. We have driven 190 miles.

3:00 p.m.: A quick stop at a martin house in Ames yields five females, the only Purple Martins for the day.

3:25 p.m.: The only bird on Little Wall Lake is a Common Loon.

3:30 p.m.: We stop at Anderson Lake where we are hoping for a repeat of our 1984 Big Day when we saw sixteen species of waterfowl. Today the only ducks are Blue-winged Teal and Wood Duck, which we have already seen. We walk the east shore, which in the past has been good for warblers and sparrows. We find a few warblers, including Canada and another Northern Parula. In a small flooded field to the east of the lake we see our first Wilson's Phalarope.

4:40 p.m.: We continue toward Big Wall Lake, encouraged by the fact that every new species will add to the Big Day record. Several flooded fields along the way contain none of our missing shorebirds, such as Semipalmated Plover, Willet, Sanderling, or Long-billed Dowitcher. We wish we had spent more time looking over the shorebirds in Guthrie and Greene counties. At Big Wall Lake we add several "easy" birds, including American Bittern, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Ring-necked Duck, Willow Flycatcher, and Cedar Waxwing. We also hear a Wood Thrush and see numerous White-crowned Sparrows, birds we thought that we had missed. We look for Sedge Wren and Le Conte's Sparrow without luck. Our list is up to 169 species.

6:20 p.m.: We stop at Elm Lake to look for waterfowl and shorebirds, but find none, except for a couple of American Coots. There are a few warblers and sparrows along the lake, but nothing new.

7:10 p.m.: At Morse Lake we find nothing, however a small marsh to the east contains pairs of Canvasback and Redhead, both new species.

7:40 p.m.: It is starting to get dark, so we decide to return to Big Wall Lake for another try for Sedge Wren and Le Conte's Sparrow. We look until dark without success. At dusk we get no response to our Black Rail tape, but we see and hear at least 8 American Bittern.

8:50 p.m.: We are exhausted and decide to call it a day. We have driven 320 miles in 19 hours of continuous birding. Of the 171 species tallied, 37 were represented by only one bird. Had we missed many of these, we might have fallen short of the previous record. Our biggest miss was Sedge Wren, a species we usually find at several locations. Other misses included Great Egret, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Semipalmated Plover, Caspian Tern, Forster's Tern, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Solitary Vireo, and Blackburnian Warbler. Although quite satisfied with our results, we can always dream of a perfect Big Day.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010
3223 West St., Ames, IA 50010

IOWA BLUEBIRD NEST BOX PROGRAM FOR 1986

DOUGLAS A. REEVES AND RITA EFTA

The decline in population of Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) in North America is widely known and documented (Zeleny 1977; Lanzafama 1984; Robbins, Bystrak, and Geissler 1986). Breeding Bird Survey data from Iowa demonstrated a dramatic decline in bluebirds from the period 1968-1970 to 1978-1980 (Zaletel and Dinsmore 1985). Reports from the 1960s discuss the success of nest boxes for bluebirds in Iowa (Patterson 1967, 1969; Petersen 1969). Since that time many people across Iowa have built and placed nest boxes for bluebirds.

Although many individuals believe their nest boxes are having an effect, the total impact on the population of bluebirds has not been determined. The Midwest Bluebird Recovery Program, based in Minnesota, monitors bluebird nest box success and has included participation by Iowans. In 1986, we expanded the effort to include more Iowans and present the results of this effort here.

METHODS

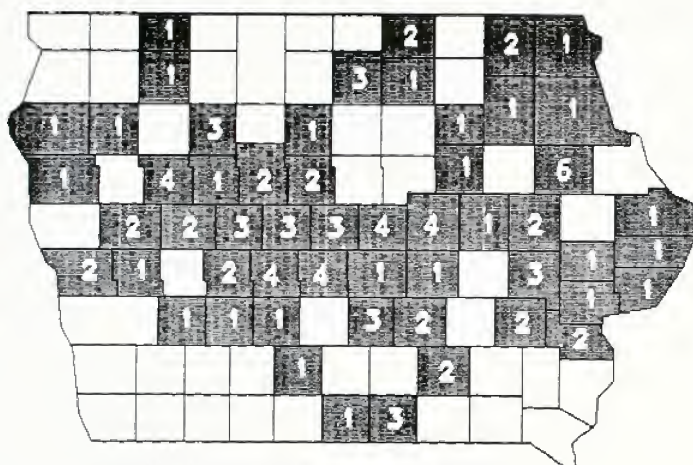
The standard Midwest Bluebird Recovery Program report form was sent to regular contributors and to individuals reached through an extensive recruitment campaign that included news releases, notices in newsletters, features in the *Des Moines Register*, and presentations to interested groups. The form asks for number of boxes monitored, number occupied by bluebirds, number of eggs, number of young fledged, number of successful broods, and other species using the boxes (e.g., House Sparrow, House Wren, Tree Swallow). Optional information was requested about the boxes used by bluebirds: type of box, nature of entrance hole, direction that the house faced, and habitat. Based on the responses, the forms were clearly understood by those completing them.

RESULTS

The Iowa Nongame Wildlife Program received over 500 requests for bluebird house plans, informative pamphlets, and report forms. An unknown number of additional requests was handled by others, including Rita Efta, the Iowa coordinator for the Midwest Bluebird Recovery Program.

By 1 November, 99 reports were received from individuals representing 54 counties (Figure). Delaware County had the most reports (6); half of the counties represented had only one report. Individual reports surveyed from 1 to 272 boxes; 55 percent of the reports were for 10 or fewer boxes. The most frequent numbers of boxes per report were 4, 5, and 6.

Bluebirds occupied 878 (36 percent) of the 2,447 boxes listed in the 99 reports. The eleven routes that had no nesting bluebirds had from 1 to 18 nest boxes, and several of these routes were new in 1986. Of the 878 boxes occupied by bluebirds, 570 produced one brood (i.e., at least one young fledged), 226 produced two broods, and 48 produced three broods. A total of 4,888 bluebird eggs was counted in successful and unsuccessful nests; 3,614 bluebirds fledged for an egg success rate of 74 percent.



Nest boxes were described in 46 reports, representing 202 boxes. Boxes were mounted on wooden posts (61 percent), steel fence posts or pipes (37 percent), and plastic pipe (2 percent). Most boxes (77 percent) were not painted or stained; 2 were made of plastic. Of the entrance holes, 106 were oblong (1 3/8 by 2 1/4 inches) and 96 were round (1 3/8 or 1 1/2 inches). About half of the boxes faced east as suggested by the North American Bluebird Society and Midwest Bluebird Recovery Program; others faced a variety of directions.

Boxes occupied by other species included 622 by House Sparrows, 508 by House Wrens, 120 by Tree Swallows, 27 by Black-capped Chickadees, 27 by European Starling, and 2 by Tufted Titmice. Rodents such as the white-footed mouse occupied 100 boxes.

DISCUSSION

Of the 2,447 nest boxes monitored by this survey, 36 percent was occupied by bluebirds, and 3,614 of 4,888 eggs (74 percent) produced fledglings. This effort makes a significant contribution to Iowa's bluebird population, although the total nesting population of bluebirds in Iowa is unknown.

Several factors may affect bluebird nesting success. Established routes are more likely to have occupied boxes than new routes (Cousineau and Morse 1986). Several of the routes in our survey that had no bluebirds nesting were new this year. Clutch size in Michigan declined as the nesting season progressed (Pinkowski 1977). The data from our survey also suggest the importance of first nesting, although this study was not designed to determine how many times each pair nested. Predation and infertile eggs probably account for most of the unsuccessful eggs. Competition for nesting sites by other birds and rodents is a major factor limiting the nesting success rate of bluebirds.

Our survey establishes the widespread use of bluebird boxes in Iowa, and the results will be useful in monitoring the success of future efforts to increase the population of bluebirds in Iowa.

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SEASON-LONG PAIR BOND OF BROWN-HEADED COWBIRDS

PETER E. LOWTHER

The mating system of Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) may be either monogamous or promiscuous (Ankney and Scott 1982). I report here an instance of season-long monogamy in Iowa.

Through most of May and June 1985, I observed a pair of cowbirds foraging together at the same site on the University of Northern Iowa campus in Cedar Falls, Black Hawk County. The female had a broken leg with inflexible foot, so that it hopped only on the other leg. The male had a patch of juvenal-plumage feathers on the nape, which, from a distance, gave the appearance of a bald patch. I recorded the pair together on seven days (9, 10, 13, 20 May; 10, 19, 23 June). No copulations were seen, but on 23 June "male guarding" was observed. At this time, when a second male was present at the foraging site, the male of the pair maintained a position between the second male and the female and performed agonistic bill-tilt and top-ple-over displays (Stokes and Stokes 1983). The female was seen alone on 2 and 3 July.

Cowbird egg-laying in Iowa has been recorded from 22 April to 27 July (Savage 1897), but most egg laying is likely limited to May and June. The 46-day period that this pair was seen together spans the core of the breeding season. Pair-bonds between identifiable birds, such as those that are banded, have been recorded in about 85 instances, with 35 observations of copulation (Elliott 1980, Darley 1982, Dufty 1982, Yokel 1986).

It has been suggested that flexibility in cowbird mating systems depends on sex ratios and the density of nests of host species (Teather and Robertson 1986). If males outnumber females and the host density is high with resultant limited movements of females, males could be pressured into guarding their mates, thus producing a tendency toward monogamous mating. With

even sex ratios, males can more easily find partners and need not guard females. With low host densities, females range more widely, increasing the likelihood of promiscuous mating.

My anecdotal observations provide one instance of monogamous mating. More systematic studies would be required to determine the overall pattern of cowbird mating in Iowa.

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Harlan's (Red-tailed) Hawk, Amana, 2 February 1987. Photos by Carl J. Bendorf.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 1986

W. ROSS SILCOCK

This year counts were reported from 41 locations, down one from last year. Lucas was the only new count this year, and Swaledale and Oskaloosa from last year did not report. We hope that their absence is only temporary.

Following last year's format, I will discuss count results by region, occurrence of regular species, rarities, and identification and documentation problems. Table 1 shows general data for the 41 counts; Table 2 shows the number of birds seen at each location for species that were recorded on four or more counts; and Table 3 lists the rarer species and unidentified birds.



COUNT RESULTS BY REGION

This year the weather throughout the state and the count period was unusually mild, with no count temperature even in the single digits; the coldest low temperature was 11 degrees at Marshalltown. There was a lot of open water, and much of the state had no snow, the 4 inches in the northeast being the most reported. Weather conditions were conducive to birding--648 observers in the field statewide set the stage for an excellent result. Despite some rather cold November weather, enough species remained to make this the third best count ever. The 123 species accepted were topped only by last year's 124 species and the 127 species in 1981.

This year, for the first time in many years, a new locality recorded the highest species count. Excellent organization, participation by top birders, great habitat, and nice weather combined to enable Rathbun to edge Davenport in total species seen. Rathbun's 77 species included some rare gulls and even a Burrowing Owl, while Davenport's 75 species did not lack for rarities either. Close behind was another promising count, Keokuk, with 74 species. The same combination of attributes which long kept Davenport in the lead should keep the competition stiff among these three locations.

As might be expected, the Mississippi River counts found the most species, ranging from 43 at Dubuque (rather low for them) to 75 at Davenport. The highest numbers of birds, however, were found as usual on the Missouri River counts, where Mallards and Snow Geese concentrate. Shenandoah had the largest total number of birds, with 115,551. Of the Missouri River counts, De Soto N.W.R. had the highest species total, an excellent 68. De Soto could have challenged for the state high had its documentation of species been better; unfortunately, 4 species were lost due to inadequate or absent details.

The Northern Third of the state was not so cold this year, but the species totals remained about normal, with the highest count of 43 at Bremer County. Northern counts average the lowest numbers of birds for the state, while the species found are consistent from year to year.

The Middle Third, where the human population is highest, has the most counts (16). Des Moines, Iowa City, and Jamaica, tied for the high count with 58 species. Cedar Rapids was close with 57 species. These are excellent

species totals for this region and reflect good organization and participation.

The Southern Third showed its potential this year with Rathbun's state high of 77 species. Red Rock continues to improve, but other counts in this region lack the obvious advantage of a large reservoir (unfrozen this year to boot!).

REGULAR SPECIES

Numbers were up for those species that take advantage of mild weather, open water, and lack of snow cover, e.g., Great Blue Heron, waterfowl, gulls, raptors, and Belted Kingfisher. Other species that one might expect to see during mild winters, but whose presence is, in fact, less related to immediate weather conditions, were present in low numbers: fruit-eaters (American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Red-headed Woodpecker) and icterids (meadowlarks, Brown-headed Cowbird, Common Grackle). The later are sensitive to early cold snaps, such as we experienced in November.

It was a great year for Great Blue Heron--32 is three times the 10-year average. Two at Mason City were farther north than expected. Canada Goose numbers exploded this year; the total of 15,126 was half the total found in the previous 10 years. Mild weather and increased local breeding of *maxima* Canada Geese account for increased numbers wintering in Iowa. Snow Geese were present in normal numbers.

Dabbling ducks, mostly Mallards, were about average, but the erratic Green-winged Teal was surprisingly low for a year with mild weather. Two dabblers did show 10-year highs--American Black Duck and Gadwall. Oakville had an amazing 268 Black Ducks, about twice the statewide 10-year average.

As might be expected, diving ducks were in their element this year with almost all species showing 10-year highs. Even so, numbers were not spectacular. Strangely, Red-breasted Merganser, was at a 10-year low. Perhaps the single Red-breasted reported was the only one not lost among the 3,627 Common Mergansers.

It was a great year for raptors. Lots of waterfowl for Bald Eagles, no snow for Northern Harriers (most were in southern Iowa) and Rough-legged Hawks, and mild conditions for American Kestrel and Red-tailed Hawk. Bald Eagles were concentrated along the Missouri and Mississippi rivers and at large reservoirs. Only 33 of the 605 were not at these locations. All *buteos*, American Kestrel, and Bald Eagle were at 10-year highs. On the other hand, *accipiter* numbers were only average. Numbers of small birds, their expected prey, were only average as well.

Gallinaceous birds were down somewhat, but not alarmingly so. The exception was Wild Turkey, which has increased every year since 1976. It was a spectacular year for gulls, both in numbers and diversity. Ten-year highs were set for both Ring-billed and Herring gulls, and an amazing six species of gulls were found.

For reasons unknown, Rock Doves were at a 10-year high. More welcome are the numbers of owls reported in the last few years. Ten-year highs were made this year for all the common species. The reporting of hours spent owling may have encouraged this activity, since the number of hours was up 48 percent over last year and the number of the three common owl

species (602 versus 431 in 1985) was up proportionally. Short-eared Owl, which occupies habitat similar to Northern Harrier, was at a 10-year high.

All the resident woodpeckers (Red-bellied, Hairy, Downy, Pileated) were at 10-year highs. Red-headed Woodpecker was at a 10-year low, presumably due to a bad acorn crop. The migrant Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was also at a 10-year low, possibly because of the cold late fall weather. Northern Flicker, which seems to move randomly as determined by weather and food conditions, was at average levels.

As expected with the lack of snow cover, there were few Horned Larks; only 575 statewide. Snow Buntings, which probably wintered farther north, were also down. Lapland Longspurs occurred in above average numbers.

Blue Jays were found in average numbers, but American Crows found Iowa to their liking this winter. The state total of 51,256 was far larger than last year's 10-year high of 34,944; The Keokuk roost of 25,000 crows was the same in both years. Crows tend to be sensitive to temperatures and will remain in Iowa in mild winters. What do 51,256 crows eat?

Resident cavity-nesters, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, and White-breasted Nuthatch, were at 10-year highs for the second year in a row. This is a good sign for these native birds, often thought to be at the mercy of European Starlings. Titmice are still rare birds in northwest Iowa. Carolina Wrens were present in good numbers; perhaps the species is making a comeback.

Notable for their absence were American Robins--only 86 were found--by far the fewest in the last 10 years. Cedar Waxwings were also scarce, with only 707 reported.

The number of Loggerhead Shrikes was below average, even when unidentified southern shrikes are included. Northern Shrikes were present in average numbers.

Sparrows were only average in numbers, and *Zonotrichia* sparrows were down significantly. All three species of the latter were near or at 10-year lows, with only 91 Harris Sparrow reported. There have been days in southwest Iowa when one pish would produce that many!

Icterids, especially cold-sensitive species (see above), were in low numbers. On the other hand, Red-winged Blackbird set a 10-year high in spectacular fashion with 80,876 birds, more than four times the next highest total in the past 10 years; however, 77,698 were near Omaha, where large roosts have been found in the past.

It was a poor year for winter finches, with no species present in above-average numbers. Noticeably absent after last year, although in average numbers, was Evening Grosbeak. Only 13 were reported, which stands in stark contrast with last year's record of 408.

UNCOMMON SPECIES

This group, shown in Table 3, provided some excitement this year, with no fewer than five species new to the Iowa CBC. Two were gull species. Thayer's Gull was reported from Keokuk and Rathbun. This species has only recently been added to the state list and is difficult

Table 1. Count Data

Location	Date	Spec.	Totals		Field		Miles		Owl		Feeder		Temp. F		Sky	
			Birds	Obs.	Pts.	Hr.	Car	Ft.	Hr.	Pts.	Hr.	Low	High	Snow	Wind	a.m./p.m.
MISSISSIPPI RIVER																
1. Yellow R.F.	27 Dec	48	2,222	13	4	29	302	8	1	2	2	22	32	4	S	5-15 clear
2. Dubuque	20 Dec	43	2,930	21	8	44	217	38	.	3	6	20	36	1	NE	5-10 .
3. Clinton	23 Dec	61	7,277	8	4	39	352	13	2	.	.	30	32	0	SW	5-12 cloudy
4. Princeton	22 Dec	52	4,999	7	4	33	335	10	3	1	2	17	39	0	W	0-5 cloudy
5. Davenport	21 Dec	75	17,494	24	10	66	495	36	5	13	26	18	39	0	SW	5-8 clear
6. Muscatine	20 Dec	55	7,881	10	4	37	495	13	2	2	5	21	32	0	NW	0-10 cloudy
7. Oakville	19 Dec	66	27,949	13	6	48	381	16	2	.	.	24	42	0	SW	0-6 clear
8. Burlington	20 Dec	59	6,388	12	4	42	118	38	2	9	20	28	40	0	S	0-5 clear/partly cloudy
9. Keokuk	3 Jan	74	40,723	13	5	44	267	18	2	4	9	28	38	1	N	5-10 partly cloudy/clear
MISSOURI RIVER																
10. Sioux City	27 Dec	46	5,173	18	5	46	280	27	6	2	1	29	40	1	S	5-8 fog/clear
11. DeSoto NWR	20 Dec	68	86,242	31	7	56	486	28	1	.	.	26	32	1	NW	25-30 cloudy/partly cloudy
12. Omaha NE	27 Dec	57	105,303	36	15	97	568	51	6	1	2	28	35	0	.	fog/cloudy
13. Shenandoah	29 Dec	57	115,551	15	4	32	301	12	2	1	5	27	36	0	NW	5-10 partly cloudy/cloudy
14. Tristate	20 Dec	47	13,122	7	2	19	205	2	1	.	.	22	38	0	.	0-0 cloudy
NORTHERN THIRD																
15. Decorah	20 Dec	39	4,080	14	5	36	380	12	2	3	3	13	36	4	N	5-10 cloudy/clear
16. Bremer Co.	20 Dec	43	2,736	8	3	22	172	13	2	.	.	18	30	4	NE	5-8 partly cloudy/clear
17. Mason City	20 Dec	39	4,575	16	6	47	392	24	2	4	6	17	33	2	NE	0-5 clear
18. Spirit Lake	20 Dec	36	8,110	13	5	27	346	13	1	16	47	16	37	0	SW	0-3 clear
19. Cherokee	21 Dec	34	4,165	13	6	40	340	4	1	3	12	13	35	1	.	0-0 fog/clear
20. Westfield	4 Jan	31	1,070	6	3	18	121	12	3	1	4	19	46	0	SW	0-25 partly cloudy/clear
MIDDLE THIRD																
21. Lost Nation	18 Dec	43	4,609	16	6	40	333	12	1	.	.	26	32	.	NW	10-20 cloudy
22. North Linn	27 Dec	47	2,894	18	6	57	432	38	4	2	14	20	36	2	SW	5-12 partly cloudy
23. Cedar Rapids	20 Dec	57	7,854	40	14	104	534	64	5	24	51	23	35	1	NW	0-10 partly cloudy/cloudy
24. Iowa City	20 Dec	58	5,933	27	10	71	579	34	7	3	6	29	36	0	E	0-3 cloudy/partly cloudy
25. Amana	28 Dec	35	1,098	8	2	15	65	10	2	.	.	25	35	0	S	5-10 fog/partly cloudy
26. Cedar Falls	21 Dec	47	4,278	5	4	27	287	17	2	2	4	15	32	3	NE	0-5 clear
27. Marshalltown	20 Dec	39	2,521	22	7	37	188	18	.	3	20	11	32	0	N	3-7 clear/cloudy
28. Eldora	29 Dec	33	2,417	9	3	28	305	10	1	5	6	28	31	2	NW	10-15 cloudy
29. Ames	20 Dec	46	9,767	26	9	55	256	45	.	1	1	17	31	1	.	0-5 clear/cloudy
30. Alleman	30 Dec	30	3,347	2	1	7	86	2	.	1	8	22	40	0	.	0-0 clear
31. Des Moines	27 Dec	58	9,260	17	5	52	368	30	3	1	8	20	31	0	S	5-9 cloudy
32. Boone County	1 Jan	49	5,588	35	12	74	351	58	5	16	41	20	30	2	NW	10-20 partly cloudy
33. Lehigh	3 Jan	18	416	8	3	9	45	5	2	6	14	21	33	1	SW	3-8 cloudy/clear
34. Fort Dodge	4 Jan	27	1,289	9	6	35	104	15	3	20	44	28	40	1	S	0-10 fog/clear
35. Jamaica	23 Dec	58	14,768	8	4	36	325	14	5	.	.	22	51	1	S	0-7 clear
36. Sac County	20 Dec	29	1,587	17	7	64	130	24	2	5	40	20	35	3	SW	5-10 clear/partly cloudy
SOUTHERN THIRD																
37. Ottumwa	27 Dec	36	2,318	12	5	32	170	6	.	.	.	27	39	0	SW	8-12 partly cloudy/clear
38. Rathbun	20 Dec	77	45,003	31	10	89	780	26	3	6	18	27	40	0	N	0-5 clear/partly cloudy
39. Red Rock	21 Dec	54	21,247	17	8	32	300	6	.	3	20	23	32	0	W	3-5 cloudy
40. Lucas	20 Dec	36	1,670	15	5	28	168	18	.	1	1	25	36	0	E	5 partly cloudy
41. Lamoni	27 Dec	32	3,393	8	3	20	220	2	2	.	.	28	28	0	SE	5-1 fog
TOTAL			615,854 648													

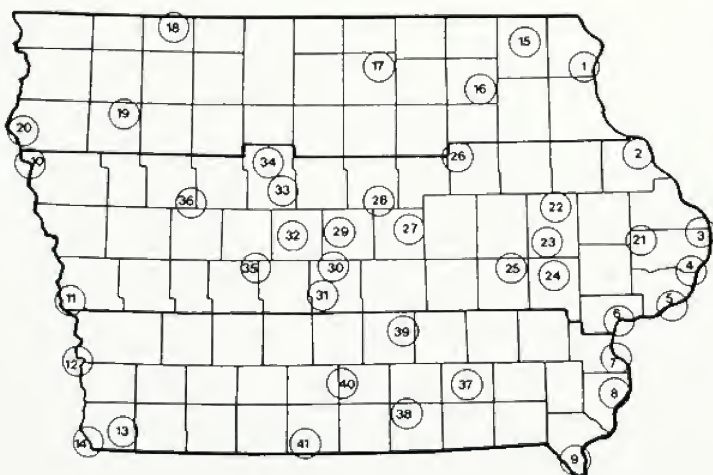


Table 2. Christmas Bird Count Data 1986

[illegible]

Table 2 cont

[illegible]

Table 3. Species Found on Three or Fewer Counts and Unidentified Birds

Common Loon: Keokuk (1)
Pied-billed Grebe: Rathbun (3)
Horned Grebe: Davenport (3)
Double-crested Cormorant: Davenport (1)
Mute Swan: Davenport (1)
Swan sp.: Dubuque (1)
Northern Shoveler: De Soto N.W.R. (2), Shenandoah (1), Rathbun (2)
Greater Scaup: Keokuk (2), Shenandoah (2), Tristate (2)
Oldsquaw: Muscatine (1)
Black Scoter: Tristate (1)
Bufflehead: Davenport (1), Keokuk (5), Des Moines (1)
Red-breasted Merganser: Rathbun (1)
Duck sp.: Boone (24)
Turkey Vulture: Oakville (2)
Buteo sp.: Omaha (4), Tristate (2), Cedar Rapids (1), Iowa City (1), Ames (1), Boone (7), Lucas (3)
Golden Eagle: Yellow R.F. (2), Oakville (1), Jamaica (1)
Merlin: Des Moines (1)
Falcon sp.: De Soto N.W.R. (1)
Ruffed Grouse: Yellow R.F. (2), Dubuque (2), Decorah (2)
Thayer's Gull: Keokuk (1), Rathbun (3)
Glaucous Gull: Rathbun (3)
Great Black-backed Gull: Davenport (1)
Black-legged Kittiwake: Rathbun (1)
Gull sp.: Iowa City (5)
Burrowing Owl: Rathbun (1)
Northern Saw-whet Owl: Shenandoah (1), Eldora (1), Boone Co. (1)
Owl sp.: De Soto N.W.R. (1), Iowa City (3), Ames (1), Boone Co. (1)
Eastern Phoebe: Omaha (1)
Sedge Wren: Cedar Rapids (1)
Townsend's Solitaire: Cherokee (1)
Bohemian Waxwing: Yellow R.F. (1), Mason City (15), Iowa City (2)
Warbler sp.: Oakville (1)
Rufous-sided Towhee: Tristate (1), Spirit Lake (1), Lost Nation (1)
Western Meadowlark: Omaha (1)
Brewer's Blackbird: Cedar Rapids (35)
Blackbird sp.: Spirit Lake (13), Marshalltown (10)
House Finch: Davenport (4), Muscatine (9)
Eurasian Tree Sparrow: Keokuk (1 in Illinois)

to identify. A Great Black-backed Gull was found at Davenport, for one of very few state records. It was seen by many observers. All these strange gulls must be greatly perturbing to Barb Wilson, who would like to lump them into one species. A group of three Horned Grebes was at Davenport for another CBC first. They were satisfactorily identified (eliminating Eared and Red-necked, both of which have been recorded on Iowa CBCs), but apparently were on the Illinois side. Finally, and perhaps most surprising on the list of Iowa CBC newcomers, was the Burrowing Owl at Rathbun. This bird was seen by many observers (although I have not yet seen a photograph) and even had a burrow. Do wintering Burrowing Owls have burrows, even within their normal wintering range?

Five species were found for only the second time on Iowa CBCs. A Common Loon at Keokuk was not unexpected in a mild winter, nor was a Black Scoter at Tristate. The scoter was on an I-29 borrow pit near Ham-

burg, Iowa. A Black-legged Kittiwake at Rathbun, where no fewer than five species of gull were found, was also a second Iowa CBC record, as was the Eastern Phoebe near Glenwood on the Omaha count. Both of these species are logical possibilities in a mild winter. A surprising Sedge Wren was well-documented at Cedar Rapids, the second winter record of this species from the same location.

Notable also was the Eurasian Tree Sparrow from the Keokuk count. This is the third CBC record, but as yet all have been seen in Illinois. As tantalizing as this species is, it is not yet on the Iowa list. A cheapie, anyone?

A few species were missed this year, which seems unavoidable. The worst misses were Northern Mockingbird and Lincoln's Sparrow, the former for only the second time and the latter for the fifth time in 10 years. Other notable misses were Snowy Owl, Hermit Thrush, Pine Grosbeak, and both crossbills. Obviously it was not a winter finch year.

REJECTIONS AND OTHER PROBLEMS

Documentation continues to improve. Some compilers do an excellent job in this area, while others appear not to care much. This year an attempt was made to detail identification of accipiters, shrikes, and meadowlarks. Most compilers cooperated, and a more accurate picture was obtained, although there were no surprises.

Two reported species were accepted, but not as originally submitted. Identification details were rather weak for both. A reported Prairie Falcon at De Soto N.W.R. was not conclusively identified, since the dark axillars were not seen, and the coloration and features described did not eliminate the possibility of a large, pale Richardson's Merlin. The description did allow acceptance as large falcon species. The other report was of a Yellow-rumped Warbler at Oakville. The observers stated that the bird was not well seen, and, while the call note was heard, it was not described. The record was relegated to "warbler species." The possible occurrence of, for example, Orange-crowned Warbler could not be eliminated.

Four reports were rejected that otherwise would have added species to the state total. A "white-winged gull" at Burlington was submitted with no details. Recent experience has shown that a good description made on the spot may allow later identification. A report without details of Broad-winged Hawk was an automatic deletion, for this species should not occur in Iowa in winter. An easy one to reject was the Ringed Turtle-Dove at Marshalltown, which was not a member of an established population and was described as an escaped or tame bird. After my temptation to accept Peafowl as an established population at North Linn last year (I still challenge you with the question, "why not?"), I am gun-shy about introduced birds. The fourth bird on the rejected list was a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, submitted with no details. While this species has occurred in Iowa in the past at CBC time, details are required.

Five species had reports accepted at some locations, but deleted at others because of unsatisfactory or, more commonly, non-existent documentations. Merlin was deleted at two locations, and Glaucous Gull, Townsend's Solitaire, Bohemian Waxwing, and Field Sparrow were deleted at one loca-

tion each. All reports of these species must be accompanied by documentations, since they are rare or difficult to identify in Iowa at CBC time.

Accipiter totals were decreased for three locations because details were not provided. Finally, some compilers miscounted their species totals

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FIELD REPORTS--WINTER 1986-1987

W. ROSS SILCOCK

WEATHER

The months of December, January, and February were, in general, warm and dry. While early December was rather snowy and cold (-18 at Cresco, -17 at Elma, -16 at Marshalltown on the 13th), the rest of the month was well above normal. Most of December's precipitation fell by the 8th; little or no precipitation fell after that date. While most snow melted soon, northeast Iowa recorded snow cover through month's end.

January--the warmest since 1964--continued the unusually mild winter in Iowa. Cresco, Waukon, Tripoli, and Charles City all recorded a high of 43 for January. Coldest readings were recorded at Sibley and Sheldon where -22 occurred on 23-24 January. Snowfall was minimal to none over most of the state. The dry, warm pattern continued through February, making this winter one of the top ten driest and warmest on record. While some locations received sporadic precipitation, eastern Iowa, for example, recorded none during the month. (Weather data prepared by Jim Sandrock.)



GENERAL TRENDS

This year 124 species were reported on Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs), and the winter report data added 26 more, for a total of 150 species detected during the period. This is a good total for Iowa in winter. There were many highlights, especially gulls, which were incredible for numbers and variety of species. It was also an excellent year for waterfowl, with almost all species reported. Passerines occurred in normal numbers, and it was a poor year for winter finches.

With careful analysis of records each winter and good documentation of most unusual records, a clearer picture is emerging regarding winter distribution and occurrence of most species in Iowa. While the 150 species recorded this winter is good, keep in mind that about 190 have been recorded on CBCs over the years.

UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

There were many unusual species, especially among those that inhabit open water on large reservoirs and the Mississippi River. Accidental species that were documented included Red-throated Loon, Pacific Loon, Gyrfalcon, California Gull, Thayer's Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Black-billed Magpie, Rock Wren, and Painted Bunting; all will be evaluated by the Records Committee. Three (Gyrfalcon, California Gull, and Painted Bunting) would be first state records if accepted by the committee. Casual species documented during the period included Black Scoter, Black-legged Kittiwake, Burrowing Owl, Townsend's Solitaire, and House Finch. Rare regular species included a number of lingering fall migrants (Horned Grebe, Eared Grebe, Oldsquaw, Surf Scoter, White-winged

Scoter, Osprey, Dunlin, Franklin's Gull, Eastern Phoebe, Sedge Wren, Dickcissel, Savannah Sparrow), rare winter birds (Prairie Falcon, Varied Thrush), and early spring migrants (Turkey Vulture, Sandhill Crane).

SPECIES DATA

* documented

Red-throated Loon: A winter-plumaged adult at Saylorville Res. on 1 Dec (*SD) is the latest ever reported.

Pacific Loon: 1 at Saylorville Res. on 6 Dec (*FLM) may have been the same bird previously reported on 30 Nov.

Common Loon: For the second consecutive year, individuals appeared in January, 1 at Saylorville Res. on the 10th (*SD), and another on the 3rd at Keokuk (*SD, *FLM). These two records and one from last year are the only January records for Iowa. Loons will winter as far north as open water permits.

Pied-billed Grebe: 1 at Saylorville Res. on 5 Jan (SD) is a rare January record.

Horned Grebe: 3 at Davenport on 21 Dec (see CBC report), and 1 at Cedar Lake in Cedar Rapids from 30 Dec to 7 Jan (SD) were late, the latter only the second January record.

Eared Grebe: 1 was late at Saylorville Res. on 1 Dec (*SD). There are other December records, however, and even one for January.

Double-crested Cormorant: Never considered intelligent, a single of this species wintered near Bettendorf (PCP, THK, SD), only the second such occurrence for Iowa.

Great Blue Heron: After the large numbers found on CBCs, a few lingered into January: 1 at Saylorville Res. on 5, 8 Jan; 1 in Guthrie Co. on 8 Jan (SD); and 1 at Iowa City on 24 Jan through the end of the period (JF).

Trumpeter Swan: 2 individuals arrived at Plattsmouth Refuge in Nebraska across from Mills Co. on 5 Dec and moved on 11 Dec to a farm pond in Mills Co., where they were fed and protected by the landowner through the period. Both were neck-banded and were from the established population in Hennepin Co., Minnesota. It appears that these birds are establishing a regular pattern of wintering south of their breeding areas. One of the pair wintered last year near Tulsa, Oklahoma. The other bird had not migrated before. Officials in Hennepin Co. indicate that a few unmarked birds also left this winter (Ruth Green fide WRS).

Mute Swan: 1 wintered at Bettendorf (*PCP). This is the expected season and location to look for this species in Iowa.

Greater White-fronted Goose: A few lingered into Jan: 2 at De Soto N.W.R. on 5 Jan (BH) and 3 in Guthrie Co. until 8 Jan (SD). These appear to be the third and fourth Jan records for Iowa.

Snow Goose: As expected this winter, many remained through the period in W Iowa, numbers varying with the weather conditions. There were 2,000 at De Soto N.W.R. on 5 Jan (BH); 20 on 8 Jan at Rathbun Res. (TNJ) were rather far east for this species in winter. One banded at Churchill, Manitoba, was picked up "in the fall" near Emerson in Mills Co. (BLW).

Ross' Goose: The avian cholera that affected geese in Fremont Co. this fall allowed Carl Priebe to count 6 Ross' Geese among 2,700 dead Snow Geese (0.22 percent Ross' Geese). The percentage is similar to that taken

by hunters (Priebe, *IBL* 57:9-10). The Ross' Geese were picked up from 3 to 29 Dec, the latter a record late date.

Canada Goose: Large numbers wintered, following record CBC numbers. There were 2,087 at Bays Branch, Guthrie Co. on 8 Jan (SD), presumably wintering there, and 600 smarter ones were heading south over Ames on 14 Jan (EM). The 2,100 at Rathbun Res. on 22 Feb (TNJ) were probably migrants.

Wood Duck: The usual few wintering birds were reported with some as far northwest as Rock Valley (JV).

Green-winged Teal: 2 at Bays Branch on 8 Jan (SD) are only the third January record.

American Black Duck: Small numbers wintered statewide as expected after the record CBC numbers.

Mallard: Large flocks wintered as expected. Notable were 6,580 at Bays Branch on 8 Jan (SD), 41,253 ("counted every one") at Rathbun Res. on 3 Jan (RLC), and 400 wintering at Rock Valley in Sioux Co. (JV).

Northern Pintail: A few wintered at various locations.

Gadwall: 2 at De Soto N.W.R. on 5 Jan (BH) and 4 at Bays Branch on 8 Jan (SD) appear to be Iowa's first January records.

American Wigeon: 1 at De Soto N.W.R. on 5 Jan (BH) and 4 at Bays Branch on 8 Jan (SD) are rare January records for this species.

Canvasback: Cecil provided excellent data again this year on the movements of this species at Pool 19 (above Keokuk). After the thaw on 3 Feb, 325 appeared. A peak of 15,000 was recorded on 22 Feb; numbers subsequently dropped off as the birds moved northward. Pool 19 is traditionally one of the major staging areas for this species in North America. A few individuals occurred elsewhere in Jan, including 6 at De Soto N.W.R. on 5 Jan (BH), a female near Credit Island from 15 to 24 Jan (PCP), 1 at Saylorville Res. on 5 Jan (SD), and 1 at Bays Branch on 8 Jan (SD). As suggested by Cecil, Canvasback stay as far north as conditions will allow.

Redhead: 1 at De Soto N.W.R. on 5 Jan (BH) is only the third January record.

Ring-necked Duck: Like Canvasback, this species is a major user of Pool 19. Cecil found a peak of 3,000 on 20 Feb. Unusual January records were of 2 birds at De Soto N.W.R. on 5 Jan (BH) and 2 at Cedar Lake on 7 Jan (SD). There are only three previous January records.

Greater Scaup: Many were reported; the highest numbers were 40 at Keokuk on 6, 7 Feb (RCe) and 38 at Montrose on 10 Jan (RCe). This uncommon migrant is being recognized more frequently and will be found in winter when there is much open water.

Lesser Scaup: The peak at Pool 19 was 8,000 on 22 Feb (RCe). Other January records for this rather common wintering species were 3 on 5 Jan at De Soto N.W.R. (BH), 9 on 7 Jan at Cedar L. (SD), and 2-6 on 5, 8 Jan at Saylorville Res. (SD).

Oldsquaw: 3 of this rare winter species were reported: an imm. male at Burlington on 5 Dec (*JF), a female at Muscatine on 20 Dec (*PCP), and a female at Saylorville Res. on 5 Jan (*SD).

Black Scoter: see CBC report.

Surf Scoter: a female was at Saylorville Res. on 6 Dec (*SD).

- White-winged Scoter:** 1 or 2, presumably the same birds, were reported at Rathbun Res. on 13, 25 Dec (TNJ), 28 Dec (*SD), and 21 Feb (RLC).
- Common Goldeneye:** Fewer than expected were reported; a peak of 320 was at Saylorville Res. on 7 Dec, with 61 still there on 8 Jan (SD), and 300 at Rathbun Res. on 19 Dec (TNJ). Spring movement was reflected by 200 in Allamakee Co. on 20 Feb (MDie).
- Bufflehead:** 3 at Saylorville Res. on 8 Jan (SD) are only the second January record. Early migrants appeared on 22 Feb in Lee Co. (RCe) and 23 Feb in Scott Co. (Tom Douglass fide PCP).
- Hooded Merganser:** 1 remained on the Iowa River north of Iowa City until 22 Jan (JF), and 2 females were at Saylorville Res. on 8, 10 Jan (SD).
- Common Merganser:** Large numbers occurred as expected in December with peak of 4,000 in early Dec at Saylorville Res. (SD). January numbers were disappointing, however, with only 300 at Rathbun Res. on 3 Jan (THK) and 202 at Saylorville Res. on 8 Jan (SD). Migrants appeared as usual in February, with 480 at L. Manawa on 12 Feb (BP a) and 1,200 at Saylorville Res. on 22 Feb (when Myers "quit counting").
- Red-breasted Merganser:** see CBC report.
- Ruddy Duck:** 12 at Keokuk on 3 Jan (CBC report) are a first record for January.
- Turkey Vulture:** 1 on 16 Feb in Lee Co. (*RCe) set a record early date, although there is a winter record from 15 Jan 1975 at Red Rock Res. (IBL 45:21). See also CBC report.
- Osprey:** 2 were seen on 8 Dec and 1 on 15 Dec at Mark Twain N.W.R., Louisa Co. (*CM). This raptor has been observed several times in December and once in January. All such reports should be documented.
- Bald Eagle:** Following the 10-year highs recorded on CBCs, good numbers remained throughout winter, especially near waterfowl concentrations.
- Northern Harrier:** A male in Story Co. on 7 Jan (MPr) was the only report after the 10-year high numbers on CBCs.
- Sharp-shinned Hawk:** The usual scattered reports were received.
- Cooper's Hawk:** The usual scattered reports were received. Identification must be made carefully in order to avoid confusion with Sharp-shinned Hawk and Northern Goshawk. Cooper's Hawk may be the least numerous of these three species in Iowa in winter. Observers should report details of sightings of this and the following species.
- Northern Goshawk:** Once thought of as an invasive species in winter, this species is occurring in Iowa in significant numbers every winter. Assuming identification of immatures is correct, 13 individuals were reported, including at least 7 adults.
- Red-shouldered Hawk:** The small population in Iowa seems to be stable, with a few individuals reported: 1 in Scott Co. on 25 Jan (AB), 1 in Marshall Co. from 25 Jan to 9 Feb (MPr), and 1 in Hamilton Co. on 23 Feb (BE). See also CBC report.
- Red-tailed Hawk:** Large numbers wintered due to open conditions. Armstrongs reported 34 in Adair Co. on 3 Feb on a raptor survey. The Amana area yielded 2 Harlan's Red-tailed Hawks during the period (CJB).
- Rough-legged Hawk:** Observers in C and NE Iowa found this species abundant this winter, with 44 on the Boone Co. CBC considered

- "conservative" (SD), and 48 seen on 3 Dec through 3 Mar in NE Iowa (MDie). Observers in SW Iowa, however, found them scarce.
- Golden Eagle:** Reports of this species away from NE Iowa must be carefully documented. There were three such reports this year. One immature was near Cherokee on 27 Jan (*MMB); another was seen on the Jamaica CBC on 19 Dec and again on 23 Dec (*GBu); and a third was seen on 19 Dec on the Oakville CBC (*PCP). None of the documentations is entirely convincing. Mention of "white patches in the wings" needs more detail as to location, shape, and extent. Immature Golden Eagle can be confused with the much more common and quite variable immature Bald Eagle. I am particularly suspicious of reports of an immature Golden Eagle among many immature Bald Eagles.
- American Kestrel:** Numbers remained high throughout the period for this species that is usually scarce in January.
- Merlin:** Singles were seen at Ames on 17 Dec (*SD), in Guthrie Co. on 28 Dec (*RKM), and in Madison Co. on 20 Feb (EuA). See also CBC report. Small falcons seen in late December through early February should be carefully identified, since some Merlins can be expected to winter in the western plains.
- Prairie Falcon:** 1 was reported from Story Co. on 1 and 17 Dec (*SD). Black axillars were seen.
- Gyr Falcon:** A report has been referred to the Records Committee.
- Gray Partridge:** This species is now being reported annually in S Iowa and is obviously expanding its range. There were 2 at Rathbun Res. on 20 Dec (*RLC), and 1 was shot in Nov near Shenandoah (Roger Sedlacek fide SD).
- Wild Turkey:** This species is doing exceptionally well. Large flocks occur along the Sioux River in NW Sioux Co. (JV), and 100 were seen on 4 Feb in Allamakee Co. (MDie).
- Northern Bobwhite:** A welcome record from the northwest edge of the range was a covey of 8 at Oak Grove S.P. in Sioux Co. on 26 Dec (JV).
- American Coot:** Unusual Jan reports included 2 wintering at Iowa City (JF), 2 at Davenport on 6 Jan (PCP), and 1 at Bays Branch on 8 Jan (SD).
- Sandhill Crane:** This rare but regular migrant in Iowa was represented by a very early individual found in a field near Amana on 10 Feb (*CJB). The earliest previous spring date was 2 Mar.
- Killdeer:** Early spring migrants were reported from many locations from 11 to 14 Feb. Unusual, but not unprecedented, were wintering individuals at Cone Marsh (THK), and up to 6 were at Big Creek S.P. on 8 Jan (SD).
- Dunlin:** 1 at Big Creek S.P. on 2 Dec (*SD) set a new late date for this late fall migrant.
- Common Snipe:** The usual scattered wintering birds were reported.
- American Woodcock:** 1 on 15 Feb at Badger Creek A., Madison Co. (EuA) is a new early date; 1 on Feb 28 at Rathbun Res. (Doug Henley fide TNJ) is the third earliest.
- Franklin's Gull:** 1 in breeding plumage on 16-17 Jan at Keokuk (*VK, *RCe) is a first January record. Another record at Credit Island on 17 Feb (Brian Blevins fide PCP) could be the same bird. These are the only records between 8 Dec and 27 Feb.

- Bonaparte's Gull:** an imm. at Saylorville Res. on 7 Dec (SD) is the second latest.
- Ring-billed Gull:** A banner winter, with many individuals wintering, such as the 10-30 at Bettendorf (PCP). There were still 500 at Rathbun Res. on 3 Jan (THK). The highest count was 6,810 at Rathbun Res. on 20 Dec (CBC report).
- California Gull:** A first report of this species from Iowa will be reviewed by the Records Committee
- Herring Gull:** Many overwintered. Peaks were 2,000 at Rathbun Res. on 3 Jan (THK), 1,500 at Davenport on 6 Jan (SD), and 31 at Saylorville Res. on 10 Jan (SD). Small numbers wintered at Iowa City (THK).
- Thayer's Gull:** An amazing 11 individuals, possibly as many as 17, of this recent newcomer to the state were reported, mostly well-documented by multiple observers. Adults included singles at Rathbun Res. on 20 Dec (*SD), Keokuk on 17 Dec through 3 Jan (*FLM, *SD, *RCe), and at Lock 15 in Davenport on 24-25 Dec (*PCP). First-year birds included 3 or 4 at Saylorville Res. on 1-10 Dec (*SD, *PCP), 2 to 5 at Red Rock Res. from 13 Dec to 3 Jan (*SD, *THK), 2 at Rathbun Res. on 20-21 Dec (*SD, *RLC), and 1 at Keokuk from 21 Dec to 18 Jan (*RCe).
- Lesser Black-backed Gull:** 1 was seen by many at Saylorville Res. on 29 Nov (*SD), and may have been the same bird that appeared at Red Rock Res. from 3 to 19 Dec (*PCP, *JF). Possibly a different bird was seen at Iowa City with Herring Gulls on 31 Jan (*JF, *CJB). Adults at Bettendorf on 6 and 14 Feb may have been different birds, since differences in bill color were perceived (*PCP).
- Glaucous Gull:** 9 or 10 birds were reported from 1 Dec to 11 Jan. All were first- and second-year birds, except for 1 adult at Red Rock Res. on 3 Jan (*THK), and third-winter birds at Saylorville Res. on 1-11 Dec (*SD) and Rathbun Res. on 20 Dec (*SD). Adults are not often seen in Iowa.
- Great Black-backed Gull:** 3 birds were reported, which is amazing when one considers that there were only two previous records. The descriptions suggest that all were different individuals. The previously reported second-winter bird at Saylorville Res. was seen on 1 Dec (*SD), a first-year bird was at Red Rock Res. on 3 Dec (*PCP), and an adult was seen by many at Bettendorf from 21 Dec to 11 Jan (*GS, *THK, *JF, *CJB, *PCP, *FLM). There are only two previous records of this species.
- Black-legged Kittiwake:** See CBC report. Another undocumented bird was reported.
- Snowy Owl:** 7 were reported from 23 Dec to 21 Feb.
- Burrowing Owl:** The CBC bird found on 20 Dec at the South Fork A. of Rathbun Res. (*RDS, *RLC) remained to 28 Dec (*SD). It seemed to be associated with five burrows (RLC). The previous late date was 15 Oct. There are a few winter records for Nebraska and Kansas.
- Long-eared Owl:** The usual scattered reports of wintering birds were received.
- Short-eared Owl:** The high count was 7 at Big Creek S.P. on 10 Jan (SD).
- Northern Saw-whet Owl:** The high count was 8 in Boone Co. during Dec and Jan (SD).
- Red-headed Woodpecker:** Few remained, due to a poor acorn crop, with "none" in SW Iowa (BLW).

Northern Flicker: 3 red-shafted birds were found, about normal in an Iowa winter period. Easternmost was 1 in Boone Co. on 2-31 Dec (SL).

Pileated Woodpecker: 1 was at Mason City on 18 Dec (TF), slightly west of the normal range.

Eastern Phoebe: See CBC report.

Black-billed Magpie: A report will be reviewed by the Records Committee.

American Crow: Two large roosts were reported: 25,000 at Keokuk (RCe) and 1,000 in Winneshiek Co. (MDie). Crow numbers were high this winter, as might be expected for this cold-sensitive species.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Only a few were reported; a poor winter for this species.

White-breasted Nuthatch: It was "exceptionally abundant" in Sioux Co. (JV), which correlates with the 10-year highs recorded on the CBCs. This is welcome news about this native cavity-nester.

Rock Wren: The fall bird at Saylorville Res. was seen up to 8 Dec (*SD, *FLM, *MPr).

Sedge Wren: See CBC report.

Eastern Bluebird: A few scattered individuals were reported, including 2 in Winneshiek Co. on 24 Feb (MDie). All others were in SE Iowa or early spring migrants.

Townsend's Solitaire: See CBC report.

American Robin: Numbers were very low this winter, only 86 on CBCs. Only 7 were subsequently reported in midwinter: 3 on 21 Jan in Ames (HZ) and 4 wintering in Winneshiek Co. (MDie).

Varied Thrush: A male at Ames from 4 to 21 Dec and on 3 Feb (*EM) and another bird at Mason City from 2 to 16 Jan (*BiK) represent a typical number for this species.

Gray Catbird: 1 at Cherokee on 2 Jan (*DBi) was very late for this species.

Brown Thrasher: 1 was at Iowa City on 8 Jan (Fred Stamler fide THK).

Bohemian Waxwing: Less than 10 were reported with documented reports from 6 Dec to 4 Jan. See also CBC report.

Cedar Waxwing: Numbers were low; no large flocks were reported.

Northern Shrike: Several were reported for the period, following the second good showing in two years on CBCs. None were south of I-80. In NE Iowa, 11 were counted from 18 Dec to 25 Feb (MDie). A demented (hungry?) individual beheaded a goldfinch which was in one of Rita Efta's traps (from outside the trap!) and then, while trying to get closer, trapped itself in another trap. It was banded, and the next day trapped itself again.

Loggerhead Shrike: See CBC report. Numbers were considered "alarmingly low" in the Rathbun area (RLC).

Northern Cardinal: A strange pair built a nest in Ames on 9 Feb (EM), at least two months early. The nest was abandoned. Some individuals (not just avian) will go to any length to pretend winter is over!

Painted Bunting: A male was photographed at a Bettendorf feeder on Jan 6 (*AB, *PCP). The only other report of this species in Iowa is an unsubstantiated spring record.

Dickcissel: A well-described individual was at a feeder in Davenport on 24 Jan (*AB). As is the case with most winter records of this species, this bird was with House Sparrows. The previous late date is 15 Dec.

- Rufous-sided Towhee:** 3 of 4 birds seen in Jan and early Feb were of the western or spotted race (*arcticus*), and the fourth was undescribed. Winter records of the eastern race (*erythrophthalmus*) are rare in Iowa.
- Field Sparrow:** The usual scattered records were from SE Iowa.
- Savannah Sparrow:** 1 was unexpected at Bays Branch on 8 Jan (*SD).
- White-throated Sparrow:** The usual wintering birds were found in SE Iowa, with a few as far north and west as Boone Co. (SD, EM).
- White-crowned Sparrow:** 25 were in Boone Co. through early Jan (SD).
- Harris' Sparrow:** This species was down markedly in SW Iowa, with none wintering on Barb Wilson's farm in Mills Co. for the first time in about 10 years. Numbers were as expected in C Iowa (SD, RKM).
- Dark-eyed Junco:** The only Oregon Junco was at Ames on 4 Dec (*JJD).
- Lapland Longspur:** The high count was 607 on 10 Jan in Polk Co. (SD).
- Snow Bunting:** The largest flock reported after the CBC period was 12 in Winneshiek Co. on 11 Jan (MDie) and 12 at Rathbun Res. throughout the period (RLC).
- Red-winged Blackbird:** Numbers were down somewhat, with no large concentrations reported.
- Eastern Meadowlark:** Observers are checking winter meadowlarks more carefully. There are only one or two records for Eastern Meadowlark from Dec to early Feb. Early returning birds were identified by song on 19 Feb in Muscatine Co. (TLD) and by call notes on 20 Feb in Jasper Co. (RCe).
- Western Meadowlark:** Although usually not specifically identified, this is the species expected in Iowa in winter. Meadowlark numbers were low this winter.
- Yellow-headed Blackbird:** 1 female at an Ames feeder through 9 Dec (SD) and 1 male photographed on 16 Dec in Winneshiek Co. (MDie) were farther north than the usual scattered December records.
- Rusty Blackbird:** The expected reports of scattered wintering flocks were received, most in S Iowa.
- Brewer's Blackbird:** 3 were in Appanoose Co. on 21 Dec (*RLC). See also CBC report.
- Common Grackle:** Although CBC numbers were down, wintering birds were found statewide, as far northwest as Sioux Co. (JV) and in NE Iowa (MDie).
- Purple Finch:** Numbers were generally low.
- House Finch:** Wintering birds are becoming a regular occurrence in E Iowa cities, with up to 17 all winter at a Muscatine feeder (*TLD) and 4 at a Davenport feeder (Scharlott Blevins fide PCP). A male at a rural feeder below Red Rock Res. (*SD) was more unusual.
- Red Crossbill:** 17 at De Soto N.W.R. on 22 Feb (DoR) were the only crossbills reported this winter.
- Common Redpoll:** Few were seen with the last 1 in Story Co. on 1 Feb (EM).
- Pine Siskin:** Numbers were normal this winter.
- Evening Grosbeak:** 1 in Allamakee Co. on 27 Dec (MDie) was the only report other than those found on CBCs.

CONTRIBUTORS

Eloise Armstrong (Booneville); Eugene Armstrong (Booneville); Ann Barker (Davenport); Carl J. Bendorf (Iowa City); Dick Bierman (Cherokee); *Marion M. Brewer (Cherokee); *Gene Burns (Jamaica); Robert Cecil (Keokuk); Raymond L. Cummins (Centerville); Mark Dietzenbach (Fort Atkinson); James J. Dinsmore (Ames); Steve Dinsmore (Ames); Timothy L. Dwyer (Muscatine); Rita Efta (Auburn); *Bruce Ehresman (Boone); Thelma Fromm (Mason City); James Fuller (Iowa City); Douglas C. Harr (Larchwood); Ronald V. Harms (Laurens); Bill Huser (S. Sioux City, NE); Thomas N. Johnson (Centerville); Thomas H. Kent (Iowa City); *Vernon Kleen (Athens, IL); N. A. Kubik (Tama); *Bill Kupka (Mason City); Sharon Laub (Rippey); *Paul Martsching (Ames); *Chet McCarty (Aledo, IL); Francis L. Moore (Waterloo); Eric Munson (Ames); Robert K. Myers (Perry); Babs Padelford (Bellevue, NE); Peter C. Petersen (Davenport); Carl Priebe (Sidney); Beth Proescholdt (Liscomb); Mark Proescholdt (Liscomb); Doug Rose (Glenwood); *Gil Sandvick (Davenport); *Randall D. Strough (Moravia); John Van Dyk (Sioux Center); Barbara L. Wilson (Hastings); and Hank Zaletel (Colo.).

PACIFIC LOONS AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

STEVE DINSMORE

In 1985, the American Ornithologists' Union split the Arctic Loon into two species: the Arctic Loon of Siberia and probably western Alaska, and the Pacific Loon, the more widespread form in North America. The two species are virtually inseparable in winter plumage, and it is not yet well known what field characters separate them in breeding plumage. There are seven previous Iowa records: six fall/winter birds and one breeding plumaged bird in April (Dinsmore et al. 1984). There are no known documented sightings of Arctic Loon in North America (Lehman 1986), and all the Iowa records are presumed to be of Pacific Loons.

During November 1986, I saw three different Pacific Loons at Saylorville Reservoir, Polk County. On 1 November 1986, I found a winter-plumaged Pacific Loon with a group of more than 300 Common Loons. The back, wings, and sides were uniformly dark black/brown and unspeckled. The crown and back of the neck were medium gray. The foreneck and chin were white. The foreneck and back of the neck were clearly separated by a narrow, dark line extending from just behind the eye to the shoulder. The dark color on the crown included the eye. The forehead was evenly rounded, not abrupt like the forehead of a Common Loon. Compared to a Common Loon, the bill was shorter, stouter, and darker. I saw no obvious chin strap. Common and Yellow-billed loons can be eliminated by their larger size, larger, heavier bills, and their lack of a three-toned neck pattern. Red-throated Loon can be eliminated by bill shape, lack of a three-toned neck pattern, and prominent speckling on the back.

On 22 November 1986, Bob Myers and I found another winter-plumaged Pacific Loon above the dam. The bird was approximately one third smaller than the Common Loon which was swimming next to it. The back, wings, and sides were uniformly dark with no speckling. The head and neck pattern on this bird was very well marked (see drawing). The bill was short, straight, and fairly dark. The crown and back of the neck were gray-brown and slightly lighter than the back. The chin and foreneck were white. The bird showed a distinct thin, dark chin strap. The white foreneck was distinctly separated from the darker back of the neck by a narrow blackish line.

The whole head and neck had a swollen, puffy appearance, unlike the slimmer neck of a Common or Red-throated loon. The forehead was smooth and evenly rounded. The bird also had a distinctive diving method. Just before each dive, the neck was fully extended. Apparently, this is characteristic of Pacific Loon. I am sure this was not the same bird that I saw on 1 November because it had a chin strap and the color of the head was quite a bit darker. This bird was seen by several people through 23 November.



Drawing of Pacific Loon from documentation of Bob Myers.

On 30 November 1986, Paul Martsching and I briefly watched a winter-plumaged Pacific Loon at the Cherry Glen Recreation Area. The bird was swimming alone, so no direct size comparisons could be made; however, my general impression was that the bird was smaller than the average Common Loon. The overall description for this bird is the same as that for the 1 November bird, except that this bird showed less contrast between the back and the head. I think that this bird was probably a third individual for the following reasons: first, it is highly unlikely that the 1 November bird (the bird it most closely resembled in plumage) would have remained undetected at the reservoir for a month; second, I believe that this bird had a slightly darker head and neck than the 1 November bird, although not as dark as the 22 November bird. For these reasons, I believe that there were three different Pacific Loons at Saylorville Reservoir this fall. These records represent the eighth, ninth, and tenth reports of Pacific Loons in Iowa.

LITERATURE CITED

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 Lehman, P. 1986. The Changing Seasons. *American Birds* 40:1178.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL AT KEOKUK

BOB CECIL

At noon on 20 October 1986, I went to Lock and Dam 19 at Keokuk to check on the presence of a late Common Moorhen. After finding it, I scanned the area below the dam with a telescope to identify the gulls present. There were about 100 gulls, mostly Ring-billed with a few Herring. After a few minutes, I discovered a large gull with a dark mantle. The entire mantle was a uniform dark gray with a prominent white trailing edge to the wings. The wing tips were jet black with a white mirror just before the tip of the

outer primary. The head and tail were white. The bill was conspicuously yellow. I hurried home to get field guides, a video camera, and make some calls. One of the birders that I called suggested that I check the leg color carefully. I found the bird again at 4:30 p.m. and observed the yellow legs. The bird was slightly smaller than the Herring Gulls. The features noted confirmed the identification of an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull. There is only one previous record of this species in Iowa. The bird was present to 22 October and was seen by Jim Sandrock, Cal Knight, Jim Fuller, and James Huntington. My video tape of the bird was submitted to the I.O.U. Records Committee. This is the first time that video tape has been submitted as documentation in Iowa. Although the video tape image of the bird does not reveal all of the diagnostic marks, it does show enough detail to exclude Great Black-backed Gull. I used a Canon VM-E1 8 mm video and dubbed it to VHS format.

327 S. 6th St., Keokuk, IA 52632

ROCK WREN AT CEDAR RAPIDS

DALE FYE AND HELEN FYE

On an overcast 30 October 1986, we were birding in southeast Cedar Rapids. At 4:30 p.m., a small bird flew in front of us and landed 2-3 feet off the ground in a small bush at the base of a railroad embankment. The bird was slightly larger than a nuthatch with a rather long, thin, slightly decurved bill. The general appearance and behavior marked it as a wren. It flew to the bottom of the steep, rock-strewn embankment and began a slow but very active ascent, hopping around on the ground and rocks except for an occasional stop on a low branch of the brush. We were able to observe the bird at less than 50 feet for approximately 15 minutes. Our presence did not seem to alarm the bird. The light eye line was distinct, but not as sharply margined as that of a Carolina Wren. The throat and breast were white, and there was a fine delicate streaking on the breast. The flanks were rusty. The back was predominantly gray with a finely speckled appearance. The tail was held horizontally, not vertically, and no tail bobbing or wagging was seen. The tail markings were not noted. At the top of the embankment the bird alternated between standing on the rails and hopping around on the rocks. Throughout the observation it exhibited a frequent bobbing motion which involved the entire body. The following day and throughout the following week other observers were unable to relocate the bird.

1758 Memorial Dr. SW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52403

ROCK WREN AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

LOREN PADELFORD AND BABS PADELFORD

On 22 November 1986, we were birding the rock face of the Saylorville Dam with B. J. Rose. At 1:20 p.m., we stopped the car at the east turnoff. As we got out of the car, a small bird flew from the roadside to the rocks, a distance of about 25 feet from us. We watched the bird for about 5 minutes as it worked its way among the rocks (presumably feeding and not always in view) and down toward the shore. The bird was larger than a House Wren, but smaller than a Water Pipit. It was uniformly gray-brown on its back, wings, and sides of the head. The throat, breast, and belly were cream-colored with pale tan vertical streaking on the breast. There was a buffy or peach-colored wash on the flanks. The bill was fairly long (about three-fourths the length of the head) and was thin, pointed, and slightly decurved. The tail in proportion to the body was shorter than that of a Water Pipit and longer than that of a House Wren. We could not relocate the bird later in the afternoon.

Jim Dinsmore, Steve Dinsmore, Pete Petersen, Bob Myers, and Paul Martsching were among the many birders who saw the bird through 8 December. Some additional characteristics mentioned in their documentations include chunky body, white speckling on the back, contrasting rump color (light to rust), and a barred tail with cream-colored corners. Two observers noted a faint white eye line. The legs and feet were described as black. The bird's behavior was described by one observer as "quite active and [it] continually flitted its wings and cocked its tail while feeding." There was some disagreement among those who documented the bird concerning the description of the tail. In addition to our description above, others described it as follows: "longer tail than a water pipit", "tail long for a wren", "fairly short tail", "large wren with a longish tail", and "long barred tail". This was the only contentious point in the overall description of the bird and shows the subjective nature of judging proportions and making size comparisons.

1405 Little John Rd., Bellevue, NE 68005



Rock Wren, Saylorville Reservoir, 22 November 1986. Photos by B. J. Rose.

I.O.U. BUSINESS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Williamsburg, 15 November 1986, 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

ANN M. BARKER

Members Present: Carl Bendorf (presiding), Eugene Armstrong, Ann Barker, Ray Cummins, Jim Dinsmore, Phyllis Harris, Francis Moore, Bob Myers, Carol Thompson.

Others Present: Tom Kent

Minutes: The minutes of the 6 September 1986 meeting were approved.

Committee Reports

Publications: Dinsmore reported that the newsletter, now in its second year, is doing quite well, and he expressed appreciation to editors, Hank Zaletel and Linda Zaletel. A proposed budget of \$925, which is about the same as last year, has not yet been approved by the Publications Committee. *Iowa Bird Life* Editor, Tom Kent, submitted a preliminary report of income and expenses for 1986. Owing to costs that were above original projection, the committee had approved a revised budget of \$5,000. The preliminary budget request for 1987 is \$5,100. Income from back issues of *Iowa Bird Life* was \$627 (net \$346). The committee recommended John Fleckenstein to fill the expiring term of Nancy Slife.

Records: In addition to reviewing bird records, the committee completed and published a new official state list. An update of the Field Checklist will be available in the near future. Myers suggested publishing an annual update of the official list. Kent noted that the annual report of the committee, published in *Iowa Bird Life*, includes this information. A budget of \$50 (\$25 for photo duplication and \$25 for copy costs) was requested for 1987. The committee recommended Carl Bendorf for another term on the committee.

Membership: Moore reported that this new committee, whose purpose is to attract new members and maintain current ones, has met twice. Membership grew slowly, but steadily, until 1978 and has leveled off since. There are 432 current members. Bendorf suggested that the activities of the committee should center around: (1) analysis of current and past membership, (2) establishment of future goals. The committee recommended a membership brochure which could be distributed at local events and mailed to potential members. Other suggestions included a questionnaire to current members and inclusion of membership information on the Field Checklist. Bendorf exhibited a new membership renewal form, which will be sent out next week. An initial budget of \$600 to \$700 was projected, which includes funds for production of a brochure and the printing and mailing of renewal notices. The committee recommended Bernie Knight for another term.

Library/Historical: Dinsmore listed eleven projects that the committee is involved in or considering. The committee reviewed its bylaws and recommended minor changes: authority to dispose of materials that are of little value, and a statement that any monies received will be deposited with the treasurer. The committee submitted a 1987 budget of \$50 to cover copying and mailing costs. The committee recommended Jim Sandrock to fill a vacant position.

Action on committee reports

The following committee appointments were approved to commence at the 1987 spring meeting and run to the year indicated: Publications, Fleckenstein (1992); Records, Bendorf (1993); Membership, Knight (1989); and Library/Historical, Sandrock (1992) [moved by Dinsmore, seconded by Moore, passed 8/0]. Suggested changes in the bylaws of the Library-Historical Committee were approved [moved by Dinsmore, seconded by Thompson, passed 8/0]. The bylaws will be published in *Iowa Bird Life*.

Old Business

Meetings: The 1987 spring meeting is planned for May 29-31 in Sioux City at Briar Cliff College. Bob Livermore is in charge of local arrangements. Bendorf will appoint a board member to serve as program chairman, since Dinsmore will be out of the state. The 1987 fall meeting was proposed for Ledges State Park during the second or third week of November, a peak time for birding at nearby Saylorville Reservoir. Hank Zaletel and Jim Dinsmore are in charge of local arrangements. The board set the dates of 13-15 November and directed the local group to pick the better of two camps for the meeting location [moved by Moore, seconded by Thompson, passed 8/0]. The 1988 spring meeting site is tentatively set for Mason City. The I.O.U. has been contacted by Fred Leshar regarding a proposal for a joint Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota meeting in the spring of 1990. Bendorf responded that we support the idea.

Bendorf announced that the three wildlife biology/ornithology students who were awarded scholarship funds at the fall meeting had written expressing gratitude to the I.O.U.

The idea of a new logo was approved at the last meeting. Design ideas are in preparation.

New Business

A major discussion and review of past accomplishments, present and future goals, and methods of implementing goals were undertaken by the Board. The following purposes of the I.O.U. were identified: (1) education relating to Iowa birds; (2) fellowship among birders; (3) promotion of interest in bird study; (4) collection, dissemination, and preservation of information; (5) acquainting members with new birding areas, and (6) providing an organized outlet for the hobby of birding.

Strengths of the organization were identified as follows: (1) publications, particularly *Iowa Bird Life*; (2) authentic state list; (3) the birdline; (4) cohesiveness of Iowa birders; (5) the longevity and history of the group; (6) excellent organization with ability to meet goals; and (7) semi-annual meeting attended by 25 percent of members.

Weakness were identified as follows: (1) insufficient number of actively involved members; (2) uneven geographical distribution of members; (3) lack of rare birds in the state; (4) small total membership; (5) small financial base; (6) low visibility in the state; and (7) projects not optimally coordinated.

The recommendations of the Review Committee from 1983 were examined, and only three have not been accomplished: (1) "That I.O.U. develop forms of affiliation with local and regional clubs with an interest in ornithology;" (2) "That I.O.U. regularly sponsor statewide ornithologic projects in which members can participate as important and valued contributors; that a projects committee be established with responsibility for planning supervising, analyzing data, and publishing results of such projects;" and (3) "That I.O.U. take immediate steps to build an endowment base." The Board questioned the feasibility of establishing affiliations with other groups. The Board noted that several projects had been started (Breeding Bird Atlas, Birdathon, Feeder Survey) even though no projects committee has been established.

The following ad hoc committees and projects were listed and discussed: (1) The Breeding Bird Atlas project is co-chaired by Carol Thompson, Barb Wilson, and John Fleckenstein. It is progressing after a slow start; (2) The Education Committee consisting of Rick Hollis, Marie Spears, and Bernie Knight was recently appointed; (3) The Bird-a-thon was chaired in its first year by Jim Sinclair. The Board felt that this event should be continued annually. A new committee was appointed—Tom Kent (chair), Ray Cummins, and Eugene Armstrong; (4) The Nominating Committee is an ad hoc committee mandated by the constitution; (5) The Feeder Survey is run by Rick Hollis. The Board would like more communication with this project. Hollis will be asked to report at the next meeting; (6) The Birdline is functioning well, and no changes were recommended; (7) It was suggested that Christmas Bird Counts could be better coordinated with earlier notification of dates; (8) One summer field trip was held in 1986 and was quite successful.

Treasurer Moore discussed the budget for 1987. Requests total \$6,675 (newsletter, \$925; journal \$5,150; Records Committee \$50; Membership Committee, \$500; Library/Historical Committee, \$50). Anticipated income is \$6,250 (dues and subscriptions, \$5,500; interest, \$750). Bendorf appointed an ad hoc financial committee (Moore, Bendorf, Kent) to review the budgetary process and submit a 1987 budget for approval at the next meeting. Suggestions for raising additional funds included: (1) call for contributions from members and (2) solicitation of new members.

The Board formulated the following objectives for 1987: (1) to establish an endowment fund; (2) to establish a new accounting system; (3) to increase membership to at least 500; (4) to strengthen projects with special attention to the Breeding Bird Atlas project and the Bird-a-thon, including more complete reporting to the Board; (5) to formulate a planning guide for meetings; and (6) to adopt a new logo. Additional goals for the next three years were to: (1) start a birding areas guide; (2) set membership goals; (3) increase the endowment fund; (4) publish Breeding Bird Atlas results; (5) work toward establishing a central office; and (6) strengthen contacts with regional clubs. It was suggested that a council of Iowa birding organizations might be established.

The Board decided that money raised from the 1986 Bird-a-thon (\$1,106) should be used to: (1) reimburse the general fund for speaker's expenses at the fall meeting (\$250); (2) support future educational projects and the Breeding Bird Atlas project (\$400); and (3) start the endowment fund (remaining amount) [moved by Armstrong, seconded by Moore, passed 8/0].

The next meeting was set for March 1987.